United Nations E/CN.5/2003/NGO/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 January 2003

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-first session
10-21 February 2003
Item 3 (b) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

Statement submitted by Foundation for the Rights of the Family, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

"We, heads of State and Government,

"Recognize the family as the basic unit of society, and acknowledge that it plays a key role in social development and as such should be strengthened, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members. In different cultural, political and social systems various forms of family exist. It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support".[1]

* E/CN.5/2003/1.

** The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

[1] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I, para. 26 (h).

03-20277 (E) 280103

The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

By designating 1994 as the International Year of the Family, the international community centred its attention on the enhancement of the family as the basis of society.

The Year served to underscore the pivotal role of families in the development process and their multifaceted role in mainstreaming the well-being of individual family members.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/124 of 17 December 1999, preparations are now under way for the celebration of the tenth anniversary in 2004. This upcoming event should stimulate forward-looking thinking concerning the family.

Furthermore, the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family should not be an isolated celebration. It should be the starting point for an in-depth follow-up analysis of what the family really means for society and why it should be protected and supported by appropriate laws and policies.

The family and social development

Families — in which most people live their lives — are basic social units of production and consumption and, as such, are at the heart of the economic process. Their needs are intimately connected with the objectives of socio-economic development and must be accounted for when establishing policies and priorities in this field.

The centrality of families to development issues has vast implications and structural connotations. A functional analysis therefore should be undertaken of the interaction and interrelationship existing between the family and the development process.

The lack of a clear understanding of the role of the family as an important partner in developmental policies and programmes would amount to neglecting a whole and fundamental intermediary network of the social fabric. By not adopting a family-centric view of social and economic development, a major productive source would be overlooked because of the failure to recognize that the provision of resources to families is an investment in human security.

In short, families should be seen as the central agents of social and economic development, because a series of interdependencies exist between the family and formal economies, as well as between the family and civil society, that need to be recognized if social development is to be effective, sustainable and equitable.

A declaration on the family

Societies worldwide recognize that the family has a number of social functions and responsibilities. In fact, families, historically and by definition, can be considered as the first private sector, with their adhering share of responsibilities which, in turn, should have their counterpart in certain rights.

The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) implicitly recognized the rights of families alongside their functions.[2]

The Foundation for the Rights of the Family feels that a declaration on family responsibilities, functions and rights should be one of the aims of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

We therefore would suggest that an open-ended group be created within the Commission for Social Development to review and extract relevant provisions on the family from national laws, international instruments and existing draft declarations.

---

[2] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex, chap. V.